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ABSTRACT

This book uses life history and ethnography to examine the lives and work of three female elementary school principals and highlights their daily use of personal and professional skills. The principals' personal backgrounds and their effect on their work are examined within the community they serve, their school, and the historical and social structures that frame their actions and interactions. The book's goal is to illustrate the complex interactions between women administrators' personal and professional lives and the social and cultural frameworks within which they work. By developing a detailed picture of the principals' daily experiences, the tensions that arise can be examined when a community, an institution, and a principal experience differences in class, race, religion, and expectations about gender and age. To understand how principals operate effectively in schools, their actions and responses in contexts within which they work must be examined. These contexts include the "personal context of the individual"; the "community context"; the "institutional context," which includes two components--the people in position of power who control process and product and the structural regularities of schools and districts that govern the actions of school principals--and the "historical and social context," which encompasses and reflects all of the others. (Contains 182 references, chapter notes, and an index.) (DFR)

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